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DEPARTMENT OF NURSING EDUCATION

IN CHARGE OF

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"THE STANDARD CURRICULUM FOR SCHOOLS OF NURSING"

Its Significance as Marking a Milestone in the Development of Nursing Education and its Value in the Expansion and Further Development of Nursing as a Profession.

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Those who have followed the history of nursing education in the United States for the last twenty-five years, may well feel that the publication of the Standard Curriculum marks a definite stage in the evolution of the nursing profession. We are proud of the progress already made and because this curriculum visualizes our ideals, we are confident that the future will see nursing even more definitely established as a profession than it is today.

For some years we have felt that we needed a standard curriculum, yet it could not have been published at a more opportune time, because the popular appeal for short courses as a war measure is daily becoming more insistent. This has made it more than ever necessary that we have clearly formulated standards and that we are zealous in maintaining them.

Twenty-five years ago, while still a pupil in training at the City Hospital, I remember distinctly that when Miss Darche and Miss Kimber returned from the World's Fair in Chicago, they called a meeting of the pupils of the school and told us about the formation of the Society of Superintendents of Training Schools. They were very enthusiastic about it and outlined what the purposes of the society were, and what the members hoped to be able to do. We were all much impressed because their ideas of what the society would accomplish were so far-reaching and indicated that the superintendents of training schools had been thinking far ahead of existing conditions and planning for the future. Some of these women are dead, some have passed out of the nursing world, but the influence of all has been carried over into the work of today, and many of their visions are crystallized in this Standard Curriculum. The society has changed its name to the National League of Nursing Education and has broadened its scope to include all actively engaged in nurse instruction, but its purpose remains the same, i. e., to standardize nursing schools, and to raise the status of the schools throughout the country by mutual

conference and guidance. We need no better evidence that the League is trying to live up to this purpose than can be found in the pages of this Standard Curriculum which is the work of a committee on education, chosen by the National League.

The original flame, lighted twenty-five years ago, has been kept burning brightly and has been passed on very directly from teacher to pupil, making this work peculiarly a labor of love. The vision of Isabel Hampton which was responsible for our Department of Nursing and Health at Teachers College, has become in a large measure the fulfillment of her gifted pupil, Miss Nutting, to whom we individually, as her students, and collectively, as a profession, owe so much.

The purpose of the Standard Curriculum as self-stated is two-fold,—(1) "To serve as a guide to training schools struggling to establish good standards of nursing education," and (2) to "represent to the public and to those who wish to study our work, a fair idea of what, under our present system, we conceive to be an acceptable training for the profession of nursing." The purpose, as further stated, is "to arrive at some general agreement as to a desirable and workable standard whose main features could be accepted by training schools of good standing throughout the country."

A very hopeful factor in the progress of nursing education is the fact that this whole curriculum represents the effort of nurses to make the preparation for their work really educational. Those actually engaged in nursing work realize the tremendous need for better preparation than the majority have had and want to see their pupils get it. It is also helpful to remember that pupils themselves are beginning to demand a sounder course of instruction and better living conditions than heretofore. "Worker, increase your wants," applies here as in industry. Young women who know what they want are discriminating in favor of the schools best prepared to meet their needs. It will be increasingly necessary for the training schools to come up more closely to the standards of other good technical schools if they are to attract intelligent and competent women.

The committee does not underestimate the devotion of superintendents, teachers and physicians who have given invaluable service to nursing education, often at great personal sacrifice and in spite of peculiar obstacles. They feel, however, that the time has come when we should insist upon our schools being placed on a sound financial basis, with a budget ample for educational work. The nurse, having shown herself to be in every sense a public servant and of as great value to the community as the teacher, should have consideration shown her in her preparation for service, particularly since she pays in long hours of strenuous work for what she receives.

The new curriculum is a socialized curriculum. We have often been accused and justly so of not having social sense. We have taken poverty, with disease and all the rest of the social ills, too much for granted. "The poor ye have always with you" was written for another age. Preventive medicine aims to reduce disease to a minimum by the aid of sanitation, public and personal. Shall we not regard physical, mental and moral ills as symptoms of graver social diseases, for which we must find the remedy?

We find in our study of the curriculum that it contains much more than we had expected. It is infinitely better than a guide for the superintendent and the teacher. It is truly an encyclopedia for the nursing profession. For most of our perplexing questions we find answers which are logical and convincing. It gives us valuable arguments with which to persuade those who are skeptical regarding our needs. Some of its pages almost visualize our ideals of what training schools might become and present the hospital graphically as an educational institution. This point of view is one which we all wish to give to our trustees, ladies' boards, training school committees, etc.

Such subjects are considered as the following: (1) The General Purpose, Character and Standing of the Hospital, (2) Form and Functions of Training School Control, (3) Type and Capacity of Hospital, (4) Range, Variety and Character of Service, (5) Conditions of Life and Work for Students, (6) The Administrative and Teaching Staff, (7) Standards of Entrance to Schools of Nursing, (8) Standards and Methods of Good Teaching, (9) Teaching Equipment, (10) Records, (11) University Affiliations, (12) References on Nursing Education and Teaching.

It seems to me a serious study of this book would prove of great value not only to individuals but in our local Leagues of Nursing Education. It is the wish of the committee that this be kept an essentially democratic production and it is hoped that all who use it will be perfectly sincere and helpful in criticism, so that each revision will make the book of increasing value in standardizing our work and improving our ideals. It is not possible, of course, that even a majority of our schools are ready for this curriculum in its entirety. Were that true, it would not be the inspiration it is bound to be, for our ideals must always be in advance of our achievement. There are no schools, however, which cannot profit in a great measure, by a careful study of the curriculum and a wise adaptation of it to their present needs.

To illustrate the thorough and inspiring manner in which the nursing subjects are covered, let us look at the familiar course of "Nursing in Diseases of Infants and Children," and note in what

special ways this subject is correlated with the broader one of Health Work, for the new curriculum gives us a challenge in that it stresses *health not disease*.

It is generally conceded that if we are to get very far in public health work, in our effort to produce a better race, we must begin with the children. Phillips Brooks said, "Whoso helps a child, helps humanity with a distinctness, with an immediateness, which no other help given to human creatures in any other stage of their human life can possibly give again." I wonder how much we have done in the past to give our pupil nurses this outlook? Most of us have enjoyed our children's services, because being human, we liked to be with young things, and children are so responsive to care and affection. But few, I fear, asked Why? in caring for their cases of malnutrition, rickets, congenital syphilis, etc. The nurse who receives her instruction in accordance with the course of study under consideration will be led to ask *why* and will then be introduced to preventive measures as well as remedies. For instance, the objects of the course include the following which are truly intended to develop a social conscience. "To give pupils some appreciation of the causes and social aspects of infant mortality and secure their interest and coöperation in the conservation of child life," also "To give a good sound basis for later work in connection with milk depots, baby welfare, school nursing and other fields of work where knowledge and skill in children's nursing are of essential importance." "The social aspects of children's diseases," is the subject of one lecture in the course to be given by the head of the Social Service Department, or a special lecturer. This lecture considers "the problem of infant mortality, what it means to the community, causes of high death rate of infants, home versus institutional care of infants; effects of child labor, malnutrition, bad housing, etc., on vitality and health of children; movements for conservation of child life." It is also suggested that an excursion to a milk station or orphanage, day nursery or foundling home might supplement this lecture.

Another lecture to be given by a teacher or other expert in child psychology, considers "the mental development of the normal child from birth to adolescence, instincts and capacities as they appear in normal development, characteristic phases of development in boys and girls, how to interest and manage children at various stages, abnormal types, how to deal with pernicious habits, the psychological and therapeutic value of play, some principles of education." It is suggested here that this lecture might be supplemented by one or more classes by a kindergartner, dealing with appropriate plays, games and

amusements for children, good pictures and stories for children at different ages, and the ways of telling an interesting story.

It is advised that the course be given early in the second year. The clinical method is stressed as being infinitely superior to the lecture and it is urged that the pupils have the opportunity to observe and handle actual cases. It is plainly seen that the nurse taught as suggested in this course, will have a thorough foundation for her work with children and should be alert to their needs, not only in the hospital but in the community.

I have chosen the subject of children's nursing for special mention but each subject is taken up in the same broad, thorough-going, human way. The curriculum is also greatly enriched by courses of fundamental importance in the education of the nurse as a social worker. Of these I would mention: Housekeeping problems of industrial families, public sanitation, occupation therapy, nursing in mental and nervous diseases, special disease problems, historical, ethical and social basis of nursing, elements of psychology, survey of the nursing field, professional problems, modern social conditions, and introduction to public health nursing and social service.

I fancy that many overworked superintendents and teachers will wonder how it is all to be done,—but suppose we cannot do it all; we know it is all necessary and what should be done. We must preach it as our gospel, we must educate the public to the need which the community has for the type of woman who is to profit by such teaching, and educate her to increase her demands. What then? Will it not be evident that since we have developed such a large body of theory, the present system is a thing outworn? Have we not here a strong argument for a central school where the nurse may spend at least one year in a three years' course in close application to study?

Suppose that we have our central school, with students assigned to hospitals for services in much the same manner as medical students, and for exactly the same purpose, will we not be able to eliminate the useless repetition of endless bed-making, cleaning, serving of meals, etc.? Will there not still be ample field for the training of the attendant who will more nearly correspond to the nurse of our mother's day? Here will be opportunity for many young women who cannot qualify educationally for the more scientific work, but who will be to the nurse what the nurse is to the physician. In the hospital they will relieve her of unnecessary routine, and when trained, will fill an important place in the service of the community, both in the homes of the fairly well-to-do and, under the guidance of the nurse, in certain forms of public health work. We surely see our "star" ahead and the Committee on Education chosen by the League has given us the "wagon" by means of which we may attempt to reach it.